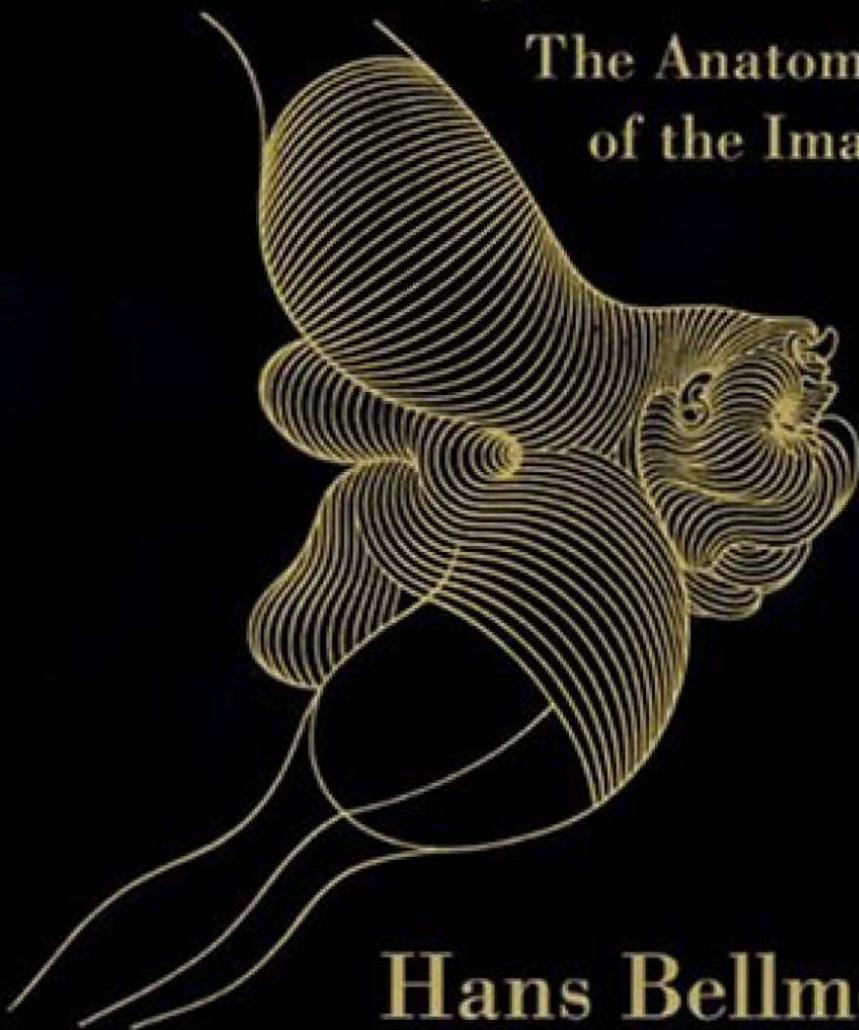


Little Anatomy of the Physical Unconscious,

or

The Anatomy of the Image



Hans Bellmer

Translated by Jon Graham — Foreword by Joe Coleman



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Little Anatomy of the Physical Unconscious, or The Anatomy of the Image by Hans Bellmer.

Translated from the French and with an introduction by Jon Graham.
Foreword by Joe Coleman.

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Hans Bellmer

The first time I ever encountered the name Hans Bellmer was as a young teenager. I received a book from my mother called *Horrors Unlocked*, an anthology which contained, as the rear jacket described, “pictures, poems, and prose.” It truly did unlock a door for me. For inside the pages of this book I found many of my mentors and heroes, creators that I still hold in the same high esteem as when I discovered them—pictures by Bosch, Brueghel, Goya, and Dali; poems by Poe, Baudelaire, and William Blake; prose by Ambrose Bierce, Charles Dickens, and Roald Dahl.

It was amongst these words and painted images that I came upon only one photograph. At first glance, it seemed to be a horribly scarred young girl, but at closer inspection, it turned out to be a doll, the most eerie doll I had ever seen. Above the image were the words:

Hans Bellmer, “The Doll,” photograph, 1934.

Much later, I discovered his masterful drawings, sculptures, and paintings of twisted, pulsating, sexually dangerous creatures that were still gestating in some cosmic womb. I have easily rated him as one of the most important of the

whole Surrealist movement. As I look around my home, covered with wax figures and dolls of all shapes and sizes, I think of how my experience with Bellmer helped create a need in me to possess these reflections of human life. I think Bellmer's dolls were his family and his friends. I think this because that's what my dolls are to me.

—Joe Coleman
New York City, 2003

Bellmer: Deserion and Desire

“With his *Little Anatomy*, Hans Bellmer has given us the instruction manual for the first seismograph of desire.”

—Annie Le Brun

Hans Bellmer’s *Little Anatomy of the Physical Unconscious, or the Anatomy of the Image* was first published in 1957, although some of its material had appeared in slightly altered form among other writings, for example those included in the catalogue for the 1947 International Exposition of Surrealism at the Maeght Gallery in Paris. Subsequent editions of the book appeared in Paris several years after the artist’s death in 1975, and more recently in 2002. But outside of specialists, critics, and a few fans, it remains unjustifiably obscure, sitting right beneath the topsoil of the contemporary cultural consensus—ticking like a time bomb.

Emphasizing the dangerous aspect of this book may seem to be a case of belaboring the self-evident; Bellmer’s work by its very nature is bound to excite the fear and loathing of all those who jockey for positions of authority as our cultural mandarins today. Whether it is his unflinching examination of personal sexuality (which has become the

private domain of the fundamentalist Christians and corporate medical science), his vertiginous assault on the parameters of individual identity, or his creation of provocative objects, Bellmer's work—like Arthur Cravan's remark about genius—arrives equipped with horns. Those who demand slavish obedience to modernity's preoccupation with insignificant, transitory symbols artlessly rigged out with the clichés of the day will seize on its “offensive” nature as epitomizing everything they claim to find objectionable in today's world. But these predictable assaults by the cardboard moralists of every stripe and political persuasion resolutely ignore its deeper implications regarding identity and desire. For, in truth, this book strikes directly at the heart of the poetically vitiated opaque language that is the newspeak of the dictatorship of the euphemism, and restores to analogy all its transformative power that has been deviously manipulated by advertising.

With the *Little Anatomy* Hans Bellmer disclosed the secrets of the simultaneity governing his graphic work and how it served to chart desire's migrations through the human body. His efforts were based on a long lineage of thinkers who understood that the integrity of one's sexual persona was indispensable to the life of both the senses and the intellect, to borrow Robert Desnos's observation of Sade. When Bellmer describes the body “as comparable to a sen-

tence that invites us to disarticulate it,” he gives us the ideal tool for distinguishing who we truly are from the fictions on which our identities are socially crafted. This disarticulation and the anagrams reflecting the “impossible transfers, metamorphoses, and permutations” that result are the necessary preliminary step toward the full reintegration of the human being, both physically and mentally.

As is the case with his fellow Surrealists, there can be no distinction made between Bellmer’s written and pictorial work. Bellmer’s book is not simply the theoretical exposition of his graphic work, but its poetic counterpart, pushing by different means the same challenge to conventional ways of perception, especially how we perceive ourselves. Under his hands our very identities become fluid, our desires migrate, resculpting the psychic landscape formed by our self-image, and in extreme cases flow beyond our usual limits. The unity of Bellmer’s graphic and literary work is emblematic of the surrealist intention of transforming reality and not simply recording it, to catch life at the cusp where consciousness and reality cease to conflict, where opposites act in unison. The creation of truly surrealist objects and graphics is not done with an eye to crafting more aesthetic clutter or illustrating the postulates of an ideology or abstract theory, but as the creations of props that will entice our dreams to manifest in the waking

world. As Nora Mitrani said in her unfinished study of the artist: “Bellmer looks forward to a time when the liberated imagination will rediscover its physical imaginings and destroy the contradiction between the interior and the exterior.”

Hans Bellmer vowed to avoid any socially productive activity—a vow he kept for the remainder of his life—as a protest against the Nazi regime that had taken power in his native Germany. It is no accident that this vow was made the same year he acknowledged the sovereign nature of desire with the creation of his first doll. His stance as a principled deserter provided him the means to work with an unmediated desire as a man who steadfastly stares at what society pretends it cannot see, to allow genuine curiosity about human behavior to be his only guide with no fear of compromising his social standing.

Pursuing his examination of the antagonistic/analogous relationship between identity and perception, Bellmer finds proof of startling complicities between coincidence and individual needs. While some critics have voiced the opinion that this section of his book sheds little light on the workings of his art, it is simply the application of his earlier exploration of universal reciprocity to a larger scale. These revelations of objective chance in fact extend the range of desire’s migrations to one where individual psychic

necessity and external events conform exactly as if projected upon a screen from two separate vantage points: one from within deepest subjectivity, one from the external world. If they do not coincide—in other words, if they are not identical—then they are false. Or as Bellmer says here quite succinctly: “What is not confirmed by chance has no validity.”

In so doing he provides one of the surest examples of the surrealist use of analogy available, one that stands in direct opposition to the debased form used by modern advertising in a shell game intended to conflate something of no value with something of quality. Whereas the atmosphere this generates is solely for the purpose of misleading the viewer for a commercial end, Bellmer never allows the prey to distract him from the shadow.

To embrace desire profoundly, as Bellmer did, and to capture its dynamic requires a desertion of time and history. In a social order that seeks to extinguish anything which threatens its own smooth functioning, only a deserter could have achieved the necessary distance to see the permutations taken by an unchanneled desire. As opposed to those who relentlessly toil to disable the very internal qualities that distinguish them from others (and to beat such qualities out of their children) Bellmer accepts desire in its fully intransigent and imperious state and perceives its

sublime nature directly at the root of corporeal experience. Bellmer's erotic vocabulary found in "the monstrous dictionary of analogies/antagonisms" mirrors desire's ability to divide itself away from its focal point in order to migrate and expand in an analogous physiological location. As Annie Le Brun has pointed out: "Bellmer is not showing us images or objects, but the unpredictable advance of a desire that turns everything—solids, liquids, flesh, paper, wood, brick, cloth, colors, or mold—into the fuel it needs to function and to harmonize with that function."

Again like that of his fellow Surrealists, Bellmer's writing can be initially disconcerting with its collage of different kinds of rhetorical styles and poetic formulations. He himself described it in a letter to his friend Herta Hausmann as "poetic secrets and whims intermixed with cold, objective thought, and a certain scientific dryness." In his book on Bellmer, Peter Webb mentions Joë Bousquet's admission of the "stupefying effect" it had on some readers and how its author expected "much in the way of empathy and imagination from his readers." This makes it all the more challenging to the modern reader whose understanding has been channeled through a rigorous series of switchbacks between speech codes and their equally agenda-laden reactions. To recast the work into a linear homogeneity that would be friendlier to the modern reader's

expectations risks, in my opinion, vitiating the author's intrinsic message. For in a very real sense, the shift in voice that Bellmer employs here is of a piece with that disarticulation which he is describing. Obviously, the anagrams present a special challenge to a translator, necessitating a choice between translating the French and German variations or creating a comparable series of anagrams based on the English translation of the phrase Bellmer and Mitrani borrowed from a poem by Gerard de Nerval. I elected to do the former and I am grateful to the help of Michael Moynihan, Annabel Lee, and Gerhard Petak in deciphering the German anagrams. I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the input I received from Rafael Lorenzo in my work on the book. He will see where I have incorporated his suggestions.

In her most recent collection of essays, French poet and essayist Annie Le Brun uses the word *eperdu* to distinguish those writers and artists who gave little thought to life and limb in fulfilling the overwhelming trajectory of their artistic adventure. *Eperdu* is an adjective that describes the emotional state of one desperately in love, or who is experiencing an emotion so intense he is temporarily beside himself. As Annie says, by staking everything on loss it acknowledges neither measure nor baseness. Hans Bellmer is one of those—like Sade, Fourier, Lautreamont, Jarry,

Roussel—whose perspective is that of the heart beating against the void. These are the rare individuals who make the alarming sound of that heartbeat the compass that guides their lifelong investigations, whereas the vast majority appear to prefer finding a constant level of noise that will drown out any disturbing presence.

On 8 January 1910 two policemen attempting to arrest the young anarchist Jean-Jacques Liaboeuf were rudely and painfully surprised to find their quarry was wearing leather armbands studded with long sharp spikes on his biceps and forearms beneath his cloak. The work of Hans Bellmer comes similarly equipped to protect itself against this kind of apprehension. There are some who try to “disarm” his work by resorting to a form of character assassination by psychobabble. However, the provocative inventions resulting from his passionate investigation of desire’s elastic purpose have carved out a place for themselves that cannot be negated by the blind realism of his critics. They remain a touchstone for all those who prefer the shadow to the prey.

—Jon Graham
Rochester, Vermont, 2003

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Hans Bellmer

I
THE IMAGES OF THE EGO

“The scorpion cures the scorpion.”

—Paracelsus

Ibelieve that the various modes of expression: postures, gestures, actions, sounds, words, the creation of graphics or objects... all result from the same set of psycho-physiological mechanisms and obey the same law of birth. The basic expression, one that has no preconceived objective, is a reflex. To what need, to what physical impulse does it respond?

For example, among all the various reflexes provoked by a toothache, let us examine that of the violent contraction of the muscles of the hand and fingers, a contraction so intense it compels the fingernails to pierce the skin. This clenched fist is an artificial focal point of excitation, a virtual “tooth” that creates a diversion by directing the flow of blood and nerve impulses away from the actual center of the pain in order to lessen it. The toothache is thus divided in half at the hand’s expense. The visible expression that results is its “logical pathos.”

Ought we to conclude from this that the most violent as well as the most imperceptible reflexive bodily change—whether occurring in the face, a limb, the tongue, or a muscle—would be

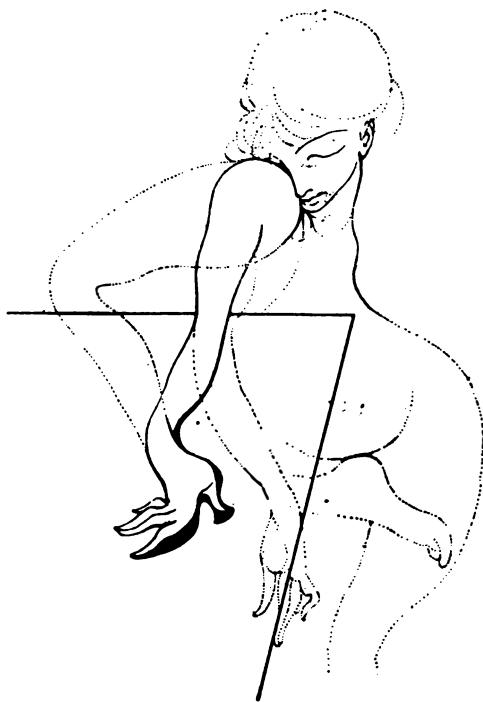
similarly explicable as a propensity to confuse and bisect a pain through the creation of a virtual center of excitation? This can be regarded as a certainty, which thereby compels us to imagine the desired continuity of our expressive life in the form of a series of deliberate transports leading from the malaise to its image. Expression with its pleasure component is a displaced pain and a deliverance.



The rather odd formation of these virtual centers of excitation seems to be an essential factor of expression and should be made the subject of more intensive research. The domain to explore would seem to be that of the internal perceptions we consciously or unconsciously have of our physical body, and the migrations away from its predominant center of excitation. Included among these perceptions are "muscular tensions," "spatial orientations," "tactile sensations," and the contributing factors of the "auditory and olfactory faculties" connected to them.

It is obvious at first glance that it is quite difficult to adapt our ordinary vocabulary to the world revealed by these perpetually mobile interoceptive diagrams, each traced atop the others and whose simultaneous description has scarcely been cultivated.

How can one in fact describe, without depreciating its value, the physical posture of a little seated girl while she is "dream-



ing"? She is leaning forward with her left shoulder raised and her arm casually stretched out on the table. This conceals the instinctive caress of her chin between her armpit and her breast, her head thus combining its weight with that of her arm and shoulder, whose pressure, reflected in the counter-pressure of her center of gravity, slides in diminishing fashion down along her muscles. It lingers around the joint, follows the elbow, and then, already weakened, travels on to the slightly upraised wrist, picks up one final burst when descending down the hand, to end

between the tip of the index finger and the table top, in the subtle accent of a little grain of sugar.

This posture can be easily explained as the consequence of the child's languid feelings in the evening while she takes pleasure from promising and rewarding daydreams understood to be more or less of an emotional and sexual nature. The prohibition of pleasure being a momentarily indisputable fact, it subsequently compels the necessity of denying the source of the conflict by erasing the existence of the sex organ and the area around it. This is achieved by "amputating" it, leg included. Nevertheless, its image remains available to move into the vacant space, assume a meaning, and thereby cloak itself in a permissible reality.

As soon as the intuitive gesture of the chin establishes this "sex-shoulder" analogy, the two images blend their respective contents by superimposing the sex over the armpit, the leg naturally over the arm, the foot over the hand, and the toes over the fingers. What results is a bizarre fusion of the "real" and the "virtual," of the "permissible" and the "forbidden," which allows the components of one to actually gain in a vague fashion what the other surrenders. This results in an ambiguous amalgam of "pure perception" and "pure representation" with a contour made *iridescent* by the slight gap between contents that are meant to converge but remain opposed. The shock of the confusion this causes in the form of a certain "dizziness" appears to be the

symptom and criteria of an internal efficiency and the probability of its solution. We could say that it brings out the presence of a spirit of contradiction within the physical organism, holding fairly irrational intentions, with a pronounced bent toward the absurd if not the scandalous, and a mentality that aims at providing the proofs of a personal reality through the realization of the impossible itself.

The seated pose of this little girl and its circumstances were quite normal... The play of displacement, barely perceived by the conscious mind, could only become visible through our interpretation. For this reason I suggest we verify the same mechanism in a rather exceptional (and in this instance definitely consciously perceived) case noted by Lombroso under the title "Transference of Sensations in Hysteria and Hypnosis."

It involves a young girl "fourteen year of age, graceful in appearance, who had abruptly grown 10" on reaching puberty and whose first menstruations were accompanied by symptoms of hysteria. After two months she began experiencing convulsions and attacks of hyperesthesia that made her believe a needle in her hand was an iron bar. After attacks of somnambulism and various changes in her character over the following months, she lost vision in both eyes and at the same time acquired the ability to see from the end of her nose and her left earlobe, while maintaining the same visual acuity. A similar transposition occurred



with her ability to smell, which later moved to her heel ...”

These are not isolated phenomena. Another girl of fourteen, who had recently begun to menstruate, exhibited convulsive coughs, headaches, fainting fits, spasms, and facial convulsions accompanied by singing, sleep that sometimes lasted for three days, and attacks of somnambulism during which she saw distinctly with her hand and read in the dark.

As in the case of the little girl sitting, there is an initial conflict between the desire and its prohibition, but here its violence is equal in intensity to the crisis of puberty that brought it on. This insoluble conflict can only lead to the repression of the sexual organ and its subsequent projection onto the eye, ear, or nose: a projection or displacement that explains—at the very basis of the phenomenon—the hyperbolic valorization of the organs of the senses and the dramatization of their functions.

But wouldn’t this initial, supposed transference, analogous to the “sex-armpit” fusion, be sufficient?

To grasp the motif of the second manifest transference, that of the eye upon the hand for example, it would be necessary to believe that the eye, doubled by the censured image of the sexual organ, could not entirely hide the compromising portion of its supplementary content. Let us suppose, without risk of serious error, that some events of an intimate nature had been seen, heard, and felt in such a way that, under the influence of shock,

repulsion, and feelings of guilt, the transfer or simply the initial loss of sight means: "I don't want to see anything," or "I don't want to see anymore." Accordingly the eye, ear, and nose exposed to these repressive measures have become in turn a "real focal point," which is necessarily opposed by a "virtual focal point of excitation," such as the hand or heel.

This explanation leads to another more general one that contradicts it to some extent and completes it. The image of the sex having slid over that of the eye, there is no obstacle for sexuality (love), disguised as the ability to see, to keep its prestigious promises. For the feeling of inferiority, of physiological reduction, cause and effect of neurosis, demands a reward and even a veritable surpassing that would consist here in the more or less objective evidence of a supernormal ability: "the power to see with one's hand." It should also be emphasized that in this instance the displacement has reached the surface of consciousness; its irrational content has become manifest.

If we can say that the clenched fist opposes the tooth, we would then be compelled to say that the image of the tooth is displaced onto the hand, the image of the sex onto the armpit, that of the leg onto the arm, that of the nose onto the heel. Hand and tooth, armpit and sex, heel and nose, in short: virtual excitation and real excitation are confused through superimposition.



Based upon the preceding perspectives, we may ask if the pleasure felt by the arm in pretending to be the leg would not be equaled by the leg's pleasure at playing the role of the arm. We may also ask ourselves if the false identity established between arm and leg, sex and armpit, eye and hand, nose and heel, would not be reciprocal. In this case, we would want to depict it as a reversible axis between the real and virtual centers of an excitation, an axis that would plot its course here and there, even in the sphere of metric anatomy, and which, given the oppositional affinity between breasts and buttocks, for example, and the mouth and the sex, would run horizontally at the level of the navel.

Note: The familiar movement of swelling the chest and hollowing out the back to emphasize the breasts is naturally accompanied by an analogous movement on the lower half of the torso, which becomes emphasized as a counterweight and is, if we can put it this way, the lower breasts.

Freud noted in his book *The Interpretation of Dreams*: "The way in which dreams treat the category of contraries and contradictions is highly remarkable. No seems not to exist as far as dreams are concerned. They show a particular preference for combining contraries into a unity or for representing them as one and the same thing. Dreams feel themselves at liberty, moreover, to represent any element by its wishful contrary; so there is no

way of deciding at a first glance whether any element that admits of a contrary is present in the dream thoughts as a positive or as a negative."

Note: Freud added as a footnote "I was astonished to learn from a pamphlet by K. Abel, *The Antithetical Meaning of Primal Words* (1884)—and the fact has been confirmed by other philologists—that the most ancient languages behave exactly like dreams in this respect. In the first instance they have only a single word to describe the two contraries at the extreme ends of a series of qualities or activities (e.g., "strong-weak," "old-young," "far-near," "bind-sever"); they only form distinct terms for the two contraries by a secondary process of making small modifications in the common word." On the same subject Freud recalls the existence of words bearing the same meanings whose letter sequence has been reversed: *Pot-Topf*,¹ *Ziege-Geiß*.²



The languages we speak today attained their maturity long ago. But the predilection for reversibility that is present in the origin of words and confers upon them their vibrant ambiguity lives on. It becomes newly apparent when automatic verbal phrases are involved that seek less to communicate something than to experience the pleasure of their own birth, to give free play to an instinctive impulse and to "create thought in the mouth" (Tristan

1. The words *Pott* and *Topf* both mean "pot" in German. (Translator's note)

2. The words *Ziege* and *Geiß* both mean "goat" in German. (Translator's note)

Tzara).

Everyone is familiar with the inclination and surprising ability for a certain category of children, if not all children, to talk backward: "Uoy era diputs," and so forth. This same inversion reflex is naturally found in genuine cases of automatic writing and language. "During 'psychographical experiments' one encounters many examples of mirror writing in which the medium writes the words backward in such a way that the message can only easily be read when reflected in a mirror. This is explained psychologically by the reversal of nerve currents in the motor centers governing written language but this explanation does not hold up when it involves the reversal of syllables. On the other hand it would be absurd to believe that the deceased were expressing themselves in this way. There can be no doubt that the phenomenon of reversed syllables is the work of the unconscious mental activity of the medium. This is all we can say for certain without fear of error. But the cause that determines this phenomenon remains psychologically inexplicable." (Ernest Bozzano, "La médiumnité polyglotte.")

There is obviously no question here of inversion: properly speaking, the reversible nature—the reversed phrase—would presume that the meaning, sound, and form remain strictly identical to what they were previously:

LEON EMIR CORNU D'UN ROC RIME NOEL

(Emir Leon with a rock for a horn rhymes Christmas)

—Charles Cros

L'AME DES UNS JAMAIS N'USE DE MAL

(The soul of some are never worn away by evil)

—Victor Hugo

EIN LEDERGURT TRUG REDEL NIE

(Redel never wore a leather belt)

—Anonymous

Rare equations of this order are singularly tenacious in becoming embedded within our memory, without initially providing any clear idea why. At first glance they do not appear to be carrying any communication of great emotional appeal. However, the stroke of inspiration that intended the same meaning from the same sequence of letters—whether from right to left or left to right—miraculously confers something immunized and indestructible to the content, which stands fast against any future reversal and encourages it to take on a particular significance.

Note: Why was I unable to forget this phrase “*Ein Ledergurt trug Redel nie*” that someone said to me around 1910? It was only in May 1942 while “tarning”³ in the Tarn that I believed to have

3. *Tarnen* in German means “to camouflage” or “disguise.” The Tarn is the name of a region of France. Hence the author may be saying he is moving about the Tarn in disguise, and providing further evidence for the linguistic alchemy he is building a case for. (Translator’s note)

discovered its meaning one day. The word *Redel*, a proper name, is a play on *redlich* meaning “honorable,” *Rädelführer* is an “insurrection leader,” and *Rädel* means “a little wheel that easily falls out.” This works out to show that the complete phrase “Caster, the honorable insurrection leader, never wears a leather belt” undeniably assumes an antimilitary meaning.



The pleasure of language in creating or retaining such expressions is certainly not the sole echo of “reversibility” that can be observed in psycho-physiological behavior. In the midst of our examination of this topic, we begin to sense a principle in which the opposition of real and virtual elements appears that can only be a condition of a natural law—a law that still requires more precision.

It is with this end in mind that we will conclude the present series of observations that originated from the reflex that bisects the pain of an aching tooth. Theoretically, the ultimate case would be that in which the entire individual is considered as a focal point of the pain that would be opposed by a virtuality that has now become externalized in the form of a hallucinatory double. In fact, a clinical observation confirms: “This projection within the double of the feeling experienced by the subject whose consciousness seems to emerge from itself is sometimes accom-

panied by a phenomenon that is no less strange. This is the exteriorization of the movements and attitudes compelled and imposed by an epileptic fit, thanks to which the image of the double becomes agitated and convulses exactly as an epileptic, which does not imply that our subject is making any abnormal gesture.”⁴

Concluding on a fairly demonstrative fact, this series of examples leaves no doubt that the simple expressive reflex, defined as the bisecting of a focal point of excitation, bears within itself the seeds of a division of the whole personality, and can lead directly to what in extreme cases would be labeled by psychology as a split personality.

While the terms “real” and “virtual” hardly lend themselves to being misunderstood—their meaning being experientially fixed, there is, on the other hand, the need to take precautions when it involves recognizing the cause of the split in question between one part of the personality and another. In accordance with the nature of reflex, we suggest it embodies the opposition in question as principles of sensitivity and motor functions which can be expressed as the split between the part of the personality that experiences an excitation and the part of the personality that creates an excitation.

Certainly the process dividing the personality should only be understood as a primordially singular phenomenon on a lower

4. Jean Lhermitte, “L’image de notre corps.”

plane, which is divided by moving onto a higher plane of consciousness in which it tends to recreate the synthesis of opposites and terminates in a higher modality of the personality, its behavior, its reality.

This movement of decomposition and synthesis—of simultaneous division and fusion—either of self-awareness or its image content, is moreover easily realized in effigy and with the support of our design, so long as the fascination of the optical experiment we are including below can only be attributed to what makes concrete the fairly obscure idea we have of the crucial point of our functioning.

Place an unframed mirror perpendicular to a photo of a naked body and slowly turn it or move it forward while maintaining a 90° angle, in such a way that the symmetrical halves of the entire visible area gradually shrink or expand in an even fashion. The image, ceaselessly created in bubbles of elasticized skin, emerges by swelling from the somewhat theoretical fissure of the axis of symmetry. Or, if you perform the movement in the opposite direction, the image diminishes to oblivion, the two halves flowing into each other like warm glue sucked into an irresistible void—like a candle placed on top of a hot stove that shrinks because it silently liquefies at its base, which is also the base of its double reflected in the melted wax. Before this abominably natural event that commands one's total attention, the question of

the reality and virtuality of the two halves weakens till fading into nothingness at the limits of consciousness.

This experiment is definitive. A demonstration is made of an incomplete reality to which its opposing image is given through the intervention of a motor element condensing the real and the virtual into a higher unity. Whether it involves the appearance on the scene by the mirror and its movement, the string spinning the top, or the expressive, reflexive action of the physical organism, we seize upon one constant law that can be summarized in this ancient formulation:

OPPOSITION IS NECESSARY IN ORDER
FOR THINGS TO EXIST AND TO FORM
A THIRD REALITY.

II

THE ANATOMY OF LOVE

“Effects may not always have need of a cause.”

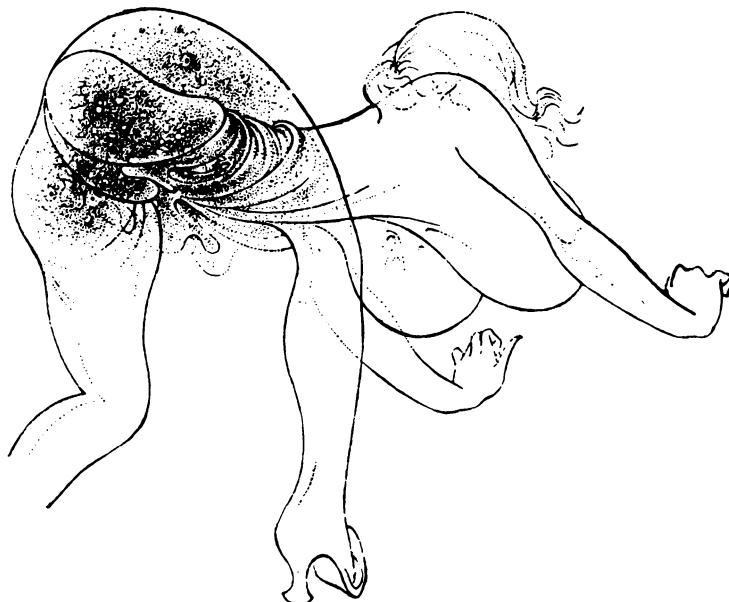
—Sade

Just as the seeds of desire will come before the creation, the hunger will occur before the self, and the self before the other—the narcissistic experience will feed the image the self (I) has of the other (you).

A man self-infatuated with a woman rarely despairs of his ability to polish the leaden mirror the woman places before his self-exultation in which she too may view her own exultation. For her to be truly provided with a tongue, two hands, four breasts, a thousand fingers, it has to be clearly understood that such a multiplication must first be experienced within the physical organism of the person looking, and that she belongs to his memory. “My little finger is fine here, he said, indicating his middle finger, but my thumb is below... Furthermore, I have one hundred feet and one hundred hands, and a thousand fingers, too.” (Jean Lhermitte, “L’image de notre corps.”)

Here is a experimental and clearly geometrical declaration of the same sentiment: a man in love with a woman and himself, sits in an armchair, falls asleep and dreams that this woman has put

a plate in his hands. Its smooth, cold surface strikes him intensely. He awakens, gets up, and notices that the imprint he left in the upholstered seat resembles a plate. In other words, having opposed the virtual, feminine image of the plate to his physical position's real focal point of excitation (the contact of his buttocks with the armchair), the man makes the astonishing realization of the relationship between both the image of the self: the imprint, and the image of the other: the plate. Now that this fact has been clarified, all that remains is to note that the image of the woman is connected in a more complex fashion to the posture of the seated [ASSIS] man than the simple shape of the female plate [ASSIette] would allow one to grasp at first glance. Because when inspected closely, the man who adapts to the shape of the armchair and is holding the plate (seat) between his two arms (arm-rests) has himself become the armchair, which he by imitating has made him female. On the other hand, the man, seen in his male role, is holding the woman by holding the plate. He is holding the woman-plate-imprint-seat-armchair, which is in turn inviting the man to sit down upon them, and so forth. What is involved here is a singular interconnection of the antagonistic "male-female" principles, which has a shade of the hermaphrodite, but in which the female armchair-plate structure is predominant. The main thing is that the man must have lived the image of the woman physically before he can actually visualize her.



It is certain that up to the present time no one has seriously questioned to what extent the image of the desired woman is predetermined by the image of the man who desires her.⁵ This process finally goes through a series of phallus projections that proceed gradually from a detail of the woman toward the whole, in such a way that the woman's finger, hand, arm, or leg becomes the man's sexual organ. Thereby the man's sexual organ could be the woman's leg clad in tight hose beneath the swelling of the thigh, or a pair of oval-shaped buttocks that emphasize the slight-

5. "During the first days of meditating, I habitually entered a state of torpor in which I felt myself becoming an erect penis... The idea of being—my body, my head—a large erect penis was so crazy that it made me want to laugh. The comic notion came to mind that such a hard erection—my entire body was taut as a hard-on—had no other release than to ejaculate. Furthermore, it was impossible to laugh because I was so hard..." —Georges Bataille.

ly arched spinal column. It could just as easily be her two breasts appended to her neck stretched taut or hanging freely from her torso, or finally the entire woman seated, her back forming a hollow, with or without a hat, or standing...

Based on this everything compels us to think that the woman's sex organ is also capable of determining its whole image. Her vagina could sit between her own thumb and index finger, her hands, her clasped feet, the creases of her arms, her armpit, or it could be her ear, her smile, a tear from her closed eye.

But for the image of the woman to obey the vagina formulation in this way, it is absolutely necessary, let me repeat, that the vagina has first been simulated by the male organism, and has invaded its physical outline and muscular imagination. In short, it is necessary to know if this simulation by the man is possible and if it is in fact capable of being verified.



Precise observations on this subject have been placed within our grasp. The hallucinations in question—cenesthesia, interoreceptive hallucinations—can be summed up as follows: the image of the body suffers the strange constraint of a movement from inside to the outside as an “extraversion,” in the sense that the interior of the physical body tends to replace the exterior. The lungs with

their vast drapery are exteriorized, unfolding in the form of wings between what had been the shoulders, arms, and legs. The inner surface, consisting of the passage connecting the mouth to the anus, the esophagus with the stomach and its intestines, seems to traverse the depths of the organism to become the epidermis of the body when totally exposed—like a glove turned inside out. The teeth are placed at the spot where the first vertebra is located, that is to say the skull, to crown the entire entity.

In one of the works by the author who transmitted that experience to us we found, by total chance, the following passage:

“At the moment we were one flesh, our love was woman...

“Overturned by the force of a passion that I would have rather refrained from sharing, she transformed her unclad body into the transparency of my heart. I possessed her within myself before actually possessing her. I had opened my own being of flesh like a fruit on top of her body. It seemed that I wanted to be reborn from her as the woman I invisibly was. In her I fucked a sexless individual whose flesh paid the ransom for my solitary pleasure.”⁶

Requiring no commentary, these documents—the first entirely, the second partially—indicate the man who has turned his curiosity to experience female intimacy and female mechanisms upon himself. Through simulation his entire body plays the game of the vaginal principle. However, thus isolated to better

6. Joë Bousquet, “Le mal d’Enfance.”

expose it, simulation can pass for a gratuitous whim, so long as its necessity does not derive from the overall conditions and circumstances of the “case,” the picture of which consequently still needs to be restored.

In 1918, at the age of 21, J. B. suffered an extremely serious wound: a bullet passed through the fifth vertebra of his spinal column and deprived him of all future use of his legs. The fact he could accept this second life by providing it with a content that was diametrically opposed in breadth and depth to what it was before the accident, presumes the presence of a latent ego that should be the only unknown factor in the equation of the Other and the I, when the question is posed this way.



It was in 1932 that J. B. felt an intense love for a young girl who reciprocated his affections. He proceeded, if one may put it this way, to her deification, focusing that deification on her very beautiful face.



Gradually her physical reality imposed itself over his own. He could catch the timbre of her voice in his own voice. Her face became internalized within his own, her entire image was projected over his and she inhabited his entire body. It is obvious that the representation gained the upper hand to the point of dis-

turbing his perception because when she entered his house, he ceased to perceive her normally. The Other did not actualize in favor of an image incorporated into the Ego; internally at prenatal depths he became the woman he was preparing to possess.



This transfer was first accompanied by ideas of incest, in the sense that she had imperceptibly become his sister, followed by ideas of hermaphroditism, until the day that his deification of the young woman and simultaneously himself had been taken to such extreme lengths that he transformed into his opposite.



She had allowed him to take obscene photos of her. The sight of these prints and the coincidental provocation supplied by an overly strong dose of cocaine caused the young woman's buttocks to become the predominant image, which became increasingly confused with the image of her heavenly face until the most fleeting expressions on that face became identical with the blind smile of the two immense eyes that were the hemispheres of her rectum opening on her anus. This is where his desire carried him exclusively, confusing the masculine and the feminine, and the self and the Other, and then sodomizing the self in the Other.



This vision of this rectum-turned-face persisted until it inspired a drawing. The resulting image was masculine in nature (the eyes, the buttocks, and the testicles) and became juxtaposed to the other vision, to the extraversion—the simulation of the vaginal principle—that occurs, we emphasize this, under the same conditions. The masculine and the feminine have become interchangeable images, both gravitating toward their amalgamation in the hermaphrodite.

At present there is no longer any obstacle to explaining the vaguely “cursed” odor that is connected to reversibility, even in the verbal domain. Here speaking backwards implies sodomizing the verb until it appears perfectly androgynous, in those rare phrases that—read up or down, or regarded as male or female—unfailingly preserve their meaning.

On the scale of the reversals to which we have witnessed the surrender of the physical imagination, extraversion is certainly the key event. Never did a more inconceivable gesture germinate in inter-anatomical obscurity. There is no regurgitation or revolt more violent that the body can formulate in its own language against the natural order to which it is subject.

The reflex that takes this form remains an exception to the norm. Going beyond the vaginal simulation it lays bare an entire range of images from impossible physiological dreams, extending from images of birth to those of death. But extraversion no doubt

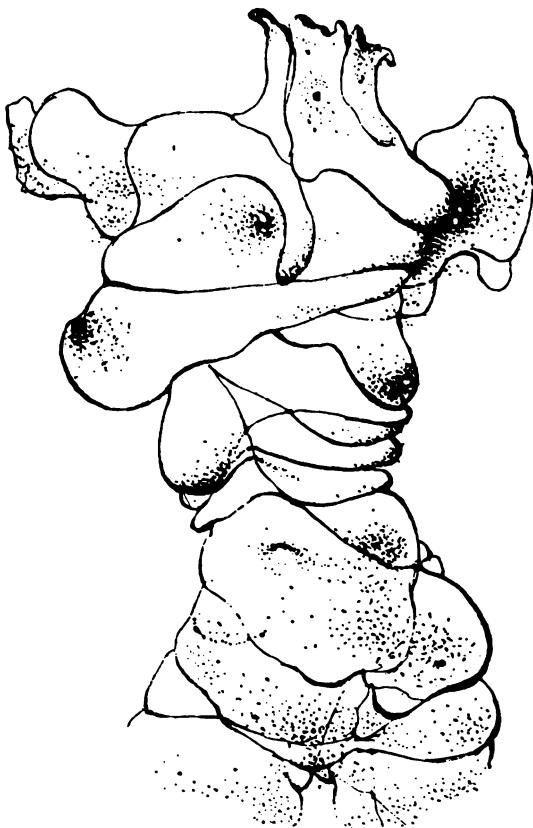
also determines the limits of an absolute exhibitionism that's impossible to uproot, which could summarize everything belonging to man's curious desire to see and scandalously reveal the interior—an interior that will always remain hidden and simply sensed behind the successive layers of the human construct and its last unknowns.



An overall view of this anatomy of love additionally confirms that desire takes its point of departure, when concerning the intensity of its images, not from a perceptive whole but from details. If a naked hand unexpectedly emerges from a pair of pants in the place of a foot, it is provocative of quite another degree of reality and—like an embarrassing stain on the edge of one's underwear—infinitely more powerful than an entirely visible woman, it hardly matters, for the moment, whether this efficacy can be attributed to the surprise of discovering a deceptive aspect of desire, anticipated souvenirs, or even some reference to dark knowledge. The main thing is to retain from the monstrous dictionary of analogies/antagonisms, which constitute the dictionary of the image, is that any given detail, such as a leg, is perceptible, accessible to memory, and available, (in short is REAL), only if desire does not fatally take it for a leg. The object identical to itself remains devoid of reality.

The mistake, though, is a fairly timid manner of realizing the Other, as long as the image lingers in the imagery domain without transforming its object. Once the woman is on the same level with her experimental vocation, accessible to its permutations, to its algebraic possibilities, capable of giving in to transubstantial whims, once she is extensible and collapsible on the epidermis and joints preserved from the natural inconveniences of assembly and disassembly—this will provide us far better and definitive information on the anatomy of desire than the practice of lovemaking. A practice in which each individual may decipher the reality of the imaginary but where again documentation is restricted to subjective proofs. The living, three-dimensional object suggests, without undergoing, its metamorphosis. This is something that is beyond the reach of photography.

To obtain objective proof, we will consequently have recourse to the criminal craftsman through the most humanely sensorial and most beautiful passion, that of abolishing the wall separating the woman from her image. According to the memory I have accurately retained of a certain photographic document, a man, to transform his victim, had tightly bound her thighs, shoulders, and breasts with crisscrossed wire haphazardly causing bulges of flesh, irregular spherical triangles, stretching into folds, unsavory lips, multiplying never before seen breasts in outrageous locations.



Notes:

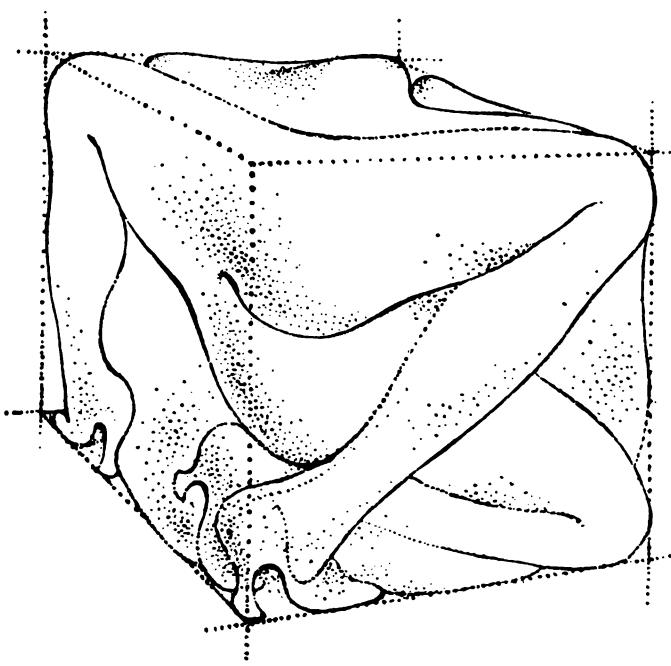
⌘ The statue of Diana of Ephesus was a black cone studded with breasts.

⌘ Le Nôtre: the practical fusion of the natural and the imagistic. Like the gardener who forces the boxwood to grow in the form of a ball, a cone, or a cube, a man imposes his elementary convictions, and the geometrical and algebraic manner of his thinking on the woman's image.

“To glorify the worship of images—the cult of multiplied sensation. The bliss of the multiplication of the number. Intoxication is a number. The number is in the individual.” (Baudelaire)



A person who enjoys demonstrations with initially obscure objectives will be tempted to attribute the following meaning to anatomical multiplication: the depiction of the mobile woman in space with the exclusion of the temporal factor. In other words, to resist the classic notion of the unity of time and space, leading to “the instantaneous,” the idea of a human projection onto a temporally neutral plane, in which the past, present, and future of her appearances are coordinated and preserved. If, instead of choosing only three or four points in time of a gesture (as illus-



trated exercise manuals do), we were to integrally combine them all in the form of an object, the result would be the visual synthesis of curves and surfaces traced by each mobile point of the body.

The life of a worm in a piece of wood projects its tracks in this way, creating a labyrinth of intimate corridors that are dream-eaten and comfortable. To obtain its positive representation, lead is poured into the furrows after which the wood is dissolved.

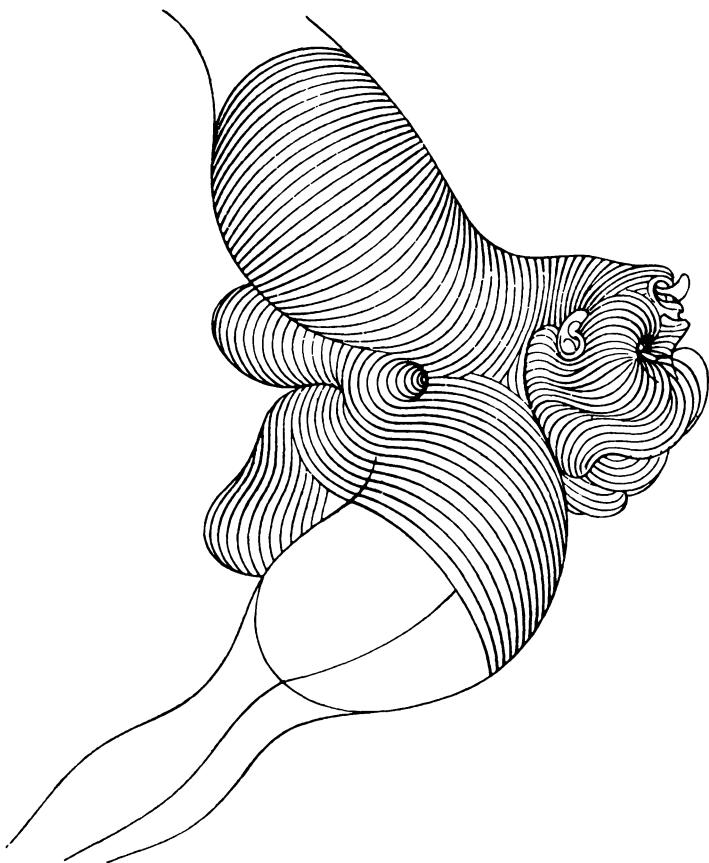
What remains is the unmoving panorama of its movement, the multiplication of the worm. This is how we would prefer the strange object to remain, a tragic and meticulous set of tracks that leaves in its passage a nude projected through a window onto the sidewalk.



To return to the question about “detail,” this time by way of division rather than multiplication, it takes only a step for the leg, solitarily perceived and appropriated by memory, to begin triumphantly living its own life and dividing itself freely, if only for the purpose of borrowing from symmetry the illusion that justifies its means to exist. It is free to cling to a head, to sit down, cephalopod-like, on her divided breasts by stiffening the back that forms their thighs thus creating an arched bifurcation of the double bridge leading from the mouth to the heels.

No one will be able to painlessly disengage from this synthesis of a hurtful Eve, suffering from her own impossible formulation, a formulation of the loveless love of the heartless young girl whose only being is a head and the inner parts of her body.

But even before being engendered by subtraction and division, she is produced by several intermingled methods. One of these is what mathematicians call “permutation.” In order to give a clear and precise picture of this, we will say: the body is com-



parable to a sentence that invites you to disarticulate it, for the purpose of recombining its actual contents through a series of endless anagrams.

What follows are several permutations of the phrase:

*ROSE AU CŒUR VIOLET*⁷

*Se vouer à toi ô cruel
A toi, couleuvre rose
O, vouloir être cause
Couver-toi, la rue ose
Ouvre-toi, ô la sucrée*



*Va, où surréal côtoie
O, l'oiseau crève-tour
Vil os écoeura route
Cœur violé osa tuer*



7. ROSE WITH A VIOLET HEART: Devoted to you o cruel one / To you, pink garter snake / O, desirous to be the cause / Cover yourself, the street dares / Open yourself, o sugared one // Go to where the surreal lies near / O, the kill tower bird / Vile bone disgusted the road / Violated heart that dared to kill.

Sœur à voile courte—écolier vous a outré⁸

Curé, où Eros t'a violé—où l'écu osera te voir

Où verte coloriée sua—cou ouvert sera loi



O rire sous le couteau⁹

Roses au cœur violet



ROSEN MIT VIOLETTEN HERZ¹⁰

Hortensie reitet zum Olm

Sie loht im Zorne, meutert

Hær'Untier, Mimose lenzt

Entræte sie im Holzturm

Lunte her, zittere im Moos

Turmotter ziehe mein Los

Immer zeitlose Totenuhr



8. Sister of the short veil—schoolboy who offended you / Priest where Eros has violated you—where the shield dares spy upon you / Where colored green sweated—open throat will be the law.

9. O laughter under the knife / Roses with violet hearts.

10. ROSES WITH A VIOLET HEART: Hydrangea rides to the Olm / She blazes in anger, mutinies / Listen monster, mimosa pumps out / Unredden her in the wood tower / Slow-match here, tremble in the moss / Tower otter, draw my lot / Ever timeless deathwatch.

Romhure zotet mit Eselin—Listviehmormone zetert¹¹

Nimm Lottes Eiterzeh'vor—Lusttote nimm rohe Reize

Heize Monstrumteile rot—Los, hetze mir vier Motten



11. Rome-whore makes filth with the she-ass—cunning cattle mormon nags / Get to work on Lotte's pus toe—Lust-murder victim, take raw charms / Heat monster parts red—Go hunt four moths for me.

*Vorzeiten-Himmel rostet*¹²

Ins leere Ruhm-Motto Zeit

Zieht Reim vom esten Lot



Im letzten Ei Rest vom Ohr

*Violetter Zenith-Sommer*¹³

We do not have the ambition to list the countless possibilities of integration and disintegration according to which desire crafts the image of what is desired. We can, however, anticipate that these inter-anatomical dreams will break through to the surface of even the collective consciousness. This will ensure that the aspects of feminine sex appeal will find themselves on the threshold of rich possibilities for application within the domains of style, beauty care, poetic and practical relations between the two sexes, and love letters, an example of which we offer below:

I

What do you want me to call you when the inside of your mouth ceases to resemble a word, when your breasts are kneeling behind your fingers, and when your feet either open or hide your armpit, and your beautiful face is

12. Prehistory-heaven roasts / Into the empty glory-motto time / Stretches rhyme from the first plummet // In the last egg the rest of the ear / Violet zenith-summer

13. The French anagrams were written by Nora Mitrani and Hans Bellmer. Joë Bousquet assisted on lines 4, 7, and 13. The German anagrams are by Hans Bellmer (1954).

aflame...

Your dress should therefore make your breasts coincide with the image of your buttocks imprinted upon the tri-colored fabric. Your legs will thus stick out to the right and left of your filled sleeves, and white stockings, in the form of long, pink, striped gloves, will encourage your fingers to be boots, whose heels will be the bodices of your thumbs, and whose red tips will be your index fingers.

Your shoulders will have the contour of your thighs. Your naked body as seen from the front will be depicted upside down on the back of your dress in such a way that it will naturally display the vertical line that separates your buttocks from your breasts in the image.

Your right foot will be repeated several times in your hair, but in arbitrary sizes, because your black hair, the color of tar with vaseline reflections, will be styled in irregular coils, each resembling your right foot soldered together in the depths of your hair at certain places where a stolen glance might be concealed.

No smaller than a large eye, your ears are the hands of the child who occupies your head, rocked by your hands whose child is no larger than you who loves me...

II

My pretty one, your passion scrupulously breaking you apart in pieces before my eyes, yesterday evening, your confusion could not be anymore victorious even though unaware—and this is but a detail—that the play of the white patience of the one hundred knucklebones of your foot stands out marvelously against the velour of your intestines.

Would you like us to arrange the hat with black tulips of your womb tomorrow and then try to lift the skin from your buttocks over your back until it veils your entire face except for your smile? Then it would be ready for Sunday afternoon. For Monday, I suggest the hat that holds the double of your natural face; for Tuesday, the hat made of hands; and Wednesday, the hat made of breasts. For Thursday, we will concentrate on the shape whose appearance you love: the left wing of the iliac bone of your pelvis, carefully embroidered with black thread emphasizing the surface it follows. Tilted slightly toward your ear it will make you beautiful. As for me, I wonder if I will be wearing the stretch pants made of your seamless legs, decorated along the inside with pieces of faux excrement.

Once I find myself benumbed beneath the pleated

skirt of all your fingers and weary from undoing the garlands with which you have encircled the somnolence of your unborn fruit, then you will breathe into me your fragrance and your fever, so that in full light my sex will emerge out of yours.



III
THE OUTSIDE WORLD

“The sun is the size of a human foot.”

—Heraclitus

Among other things, it so happens that what proceeds from an object, for example a female foot, is only real if desire does not fatally take it for a foot.

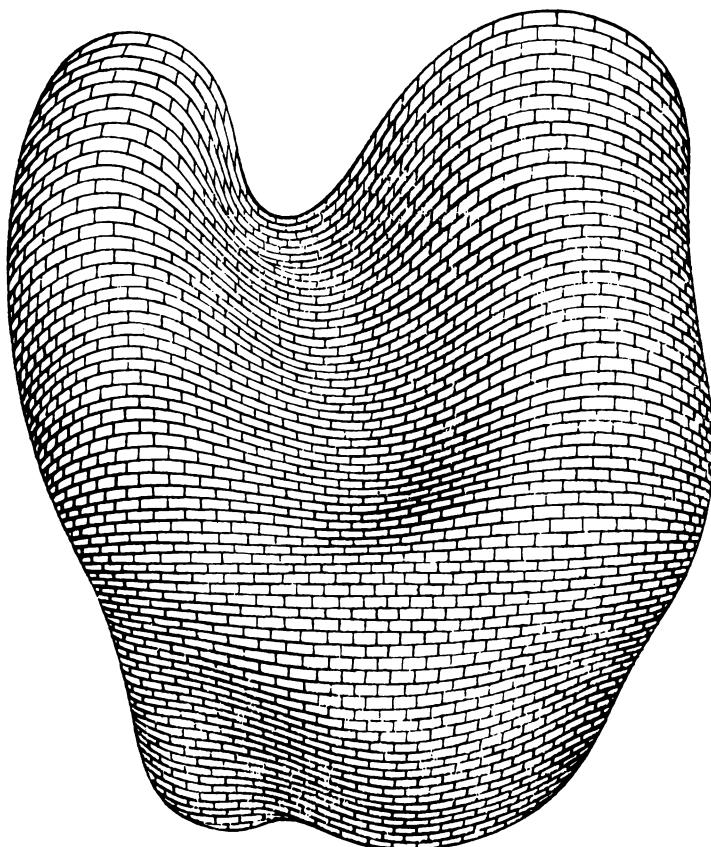
A frightened man will say: “You go into the forest, you take out your knife to cut what appears to be a branch and you discover you have cut your own arm.”¹⁴

The shock experienced before the duplicity of appearances is too violent for the current game of poetic comparisons to ever exhaust its development and not call for a radical revision of our concepts of identity.

If the epileptic manages to exteriorize his pain in a hallucinatory double, there is reason to emphasize the analogous but much less exceptional case in which the expression of pain or pleasure is projected on a pre-existing image, one ready to assume the role of a virtual focal point of excitation.

When I am gripped by the sight of a single twisted tree sur-

14. Lévy-Bruhl, *Primitives and the Supernatural*.



rounded by others of the same species, which are either twisted differently or not at all, it shows I am receptive to the contorting gesture of the double symbolized by the tree and frees me of my need to contort myself because it is doing so in my stead. To find a stone on the road, which is precious in terms of the initial hermetic relationship it appears to have with my life, is to feel that it precisely responds, in the morphological order of its language, to an as-yet-unexpressed emotion within me. But for the tree to be seen and the stone discovered implies a previous state of alertness or specific attention, similar to intuition, that led the individual to discern these identical phenomena he shares with the outside world.

In short this means that *a subjective excitation, or its image-memory, precedes perception and predetermines it*. On the other hand it can also be easily imagined that, disregarding individual predisposition, an external cause imposes its perception and the image-souvenir subsequently comes to meet it. In short, the movement goes from the object to the subject.

Why not? Theoretically a phosphorus bomb that explodes next to me forces me to “perceive” it even if it does not respond to my predispositions. The question is rather knowing why I actually retain from that event the image of a pointed, yellow shoe, belonging to a middle-aged man—a shoe displaying the hideous phenomena that is generated when leather is exposed to high

temperatures.

In fact, the objection raised above does not take into account the fact that perceptive selection exists in every case.

The impressions proposed or imposed by the outside world are multiple, if not chaotic. They collide with the subjective disposition that, provoked in this way, will then determine the precise choice of the image-souvenir in the compartment of the memory, whose color is in play at that moment and, which, by the same gesture, will determine the choice of the congruent, external image-perception.

“The image” would thus be the synthesis of two images actualized simultaneously. The degree of resemblance, dissimilarity, or antagonism between these two images probably constitutes the degree of intensity, reality, and “shock value” of the resulting image, in other words, the “perception-representation” image.

Comparison is the first phase of bringing two images together. Lastly it aims at providing at least the formal identical aspects of the two elements under comparison. This, and the role played by their intuitive choice, is capable of being verified in practice if one resorts to the following involuntary experiment:

“At a time when a storm was approaching during the middle of the afternoon, I took a nap. Before waking, I had the intense and very fleeting vision of a series of women’s legs, luminously displayed before a black backdrop, that advanced in jerking

movements, the feet pointed like the moving angles of several compasses, superimposed to a certain degree:



“Simultaneously in the same impromptu hallucination, I heard these four words: *‘je ne dis pas...*”¹⁵

“The surprise this caused, accompanied by a light sensation of dizziness, made further sleep impossible. My consciousness became active. This rebus, whose satisfactory solution I instantly saw upon awakening, tangibly intrigued me:

... *je ne DIS PAS = DIX PAS...*¹⁶

“What struck me initially was that I had ignored a conversation taking place in the adjoining room until such time that my intuition perceived a kind of double meaning, one of which was almost certainly completely appropriate for my predisposition. Once this choice has been made, it is simply a matter of disarticulating the double image. On the one hand, we need to realize the image-souvenir in the form of a visual perception (*dix pas*) and, on the other hand, the image coming from the outside in the form of the auditory perception (*dis pas*) in order for consciousness to become aware of their identical nature and to also find the

15. “I am not saying...” (Translator’s note)

16. “...I am not saying = ten steps...” (Translator’s note)

solution."

Thus intuition has this problem to resolve: to grasp, in a single movement—within a group of auditory stimulants of excitation and a group of interior stimulants of excitation (connected to the posture, the psychic atmosphere of the moment, memory, etc.)—two images responding to one single representational situation, capable of supplying proof they are identical and are components of a perceptive unity fed equally from within and without. It would be difficult to grasp such a realization—which could easily be regarded as an act of prestidigitation—without having recourse to the idea of coincidence.

Naturally it will be asked if any other element of a banal conversation heard thousands of times could lend itself just as easily to an intentional double interpretation. Each perceived element can no doubt have its double on a scale of effectiveness going from the vaguely possible analogy to being "strictly" identical.

This intuition will always have to choose among all the possibilities for which is most striking and best responds to individual necessity and the obligation to be identical. However, the perceptive material, coming from the outside, can be more or less favorable to this kind of requirement. With intuitive choice, chance enters into play...

The point to which this can be monitored, in the case cited,

remains to be seen. Does the necessary relationship exist between the image “*dis pas = dix pas*” and the predispositions of the sleeper? It still remains to be seen whether instead of seeing a series of legs, it would not have been equally satisfying to see a bound parcel (*je ne dis pas PASQU'ETienne...*).¹⁷

A satisfactory answer could only be based on the complete understanding of the anatomical, psychic, and intellectual condition of the sleeper. Here is an incomplete enumeration of that data:

1) The problem of troubled sleep during that time, whether in the day or night had taken on an almost neurotic aspect for period of several weeks. A feeling of overall pessimism (unhealthy marriage) was of a nature to inspire hateful reactions and encourage erotic representations with no preconceived subject.

2) In order to depict “ten steps” [*dix pas*] the dream had no need for several pairs of legs. So the taste for the anatomical multiplication is due to the dreamer. He returns (to borrow a personal example), to an image from childhood (the thousand-armed depiction of the goddess Kali-Durga). But it will be enough to note the affective despair, the awareness of a complete failure of an emotional nature that predisposes one to compensatory images and a multiplication of promise.

3) Concerning the graphic structure of the visual image we know that pointed shapes, zigzags, diamonds, intersections, etc.,

17. “Parcel” is *Pacquet* in French; the translation of the phrase with the addition of *paquet/pasquet* could possibly be “I am not saying it is yours...” or “I am not saying bound parcel...” (Translator’s note)

are expressions of “sadism” or at least an aggressive mindset. The rhythmic pace should have an infamous (possibly military) meaning.

According to these conditions, the double image, “*dix pas = dis pas*” could have been something entirely different, but still one that remains completely within the limits we have noted:

Erotic promise.

The multiplication of the promise.

Structure of an aggressive nature.

Through the lack of any objective observation of the sleeping man, this dream-perception does not allow the logical relationship to be fixed between the structure of the double image (perception-representation) and that of the physical outline of the dreamer with the precision that characterizes the case of the “man with the plate.” The gaps of this examination can be suitably filled by the conclusions drawn from the other case, so long as the facts observed fit into the same category.



We have found ourselves faced with a similar mode of perception-dream on several different occasions, all of which represent one single well-defined category:

- 1) By virtue of the fact it is located on the very border that separates sleep from waking.

- 2) By the opposition of an image-perception (prompting the sleeper to wake up) to an image-souvenir-representation.
- 3) Because thought at the threshold of consciousness is engaged in the realization of the irrational identical nature of the two images.

Conventional psychology, furthermore, does not ignore this kind of dream. *“Certain deceptive waking perceptions* are especially characterized by their dependence on the state of consciousness... Mrs. M. clearly felt at night that someone was violently pulling a lock of her hair toward the left side of the nape of her neck. At the same moment she had a brief vision of a high flame that vanished immediately. This was between sleep and waking. They all contain an element of suddenness analogous to a flash of lightning.”

To my knowledge, there is no normal phenomenon in which the duplicity of the image and the content of its constituent elements emerges with more clarity, and in which observation is less burdened with accessory or anecdotal ornamentation. It is as much by this natural geometricization as by their experimental facility, if one may say so, that these “perception-dreams” offer themselves for the study of image formation and the relationship between the “anatomy” of this image and the images of our anatomy.



The dream "*dis pas = dix pas*" can be regarded as fairly unexceptional because it coincided with the thoughts then present. Their presence turns it into an almost intentional experience. Consequently we note an analogous fact that provides a more general summary of our earlier conclusions:

Around two o'clock in the morning I heard a nearby siren that was sounding an air raid alert and was growing progressively louder. My wife's sleep became troubled. She reawakened, terrified, after having the following dream:

"While vaguely conscious of the air raid siren, she saw the fairly bizarre chimney on the roof of the house facing ours as both a 'siren' and an 'erect phallus' while it still maintained its identity as a chimney."

With a rare precision, what results is that the normally perceived image (the chimney on the roof) forms a unity of two unconscious images holding a twofold emotional charge. Together this forms a completely rendered "third image"—here: the chimney—in which the term for fear, symbolized by the siren, and the opposite term for desire are combined. As for the identical identification of these two components (the siren and the phallus), both are identical to the chimney and consequently equal.

Therefore the work performed by intuition consists of the following: to uncouple the two unconscious components of the irrational image and to transport these two components—as rep-

resentation, or as “deceptive perception”—to the surface of consciousness. This work provided by intuition is that of the IMAGINATION.



From this point there can be no confusion concerning the process of the image. An enthusiastically industrious “genie” behind the “ego” seems to add a great deal of himself, in order for “me” to perceive and imagine. Without a doubt, he is a disrespectful genie, for whom the logic of identity, the separation of mind from body, or the twaddle of “good” and “evil” are at most subject matter for jokes, and who only sings wholeheartedly the glory of the improbable, of error, and of chance. As if illogic were a comfort, thought were allowed to laugh, error were the proper route, love the acceptable world, and chance an eternal proof.

It has been clarified that the “image” is engendered in acute points of transition or conflict, which is to say in a particular atmosphere, with a heightened temperature and pressure, which all the evidence shows is located under the constellation of chance.

I believe the two following stories will permit the reader to assign more exact designations to this atmosphere and to chance:

One day in 1937 I was alerted to the fact that M. was

stricken by an incurable illness that was in a very advanced state. After pursuing an endless dream of affection together with her that reduced, while she slept, the fear of individual abandonment, I remained alone with my sense of rebellion against the blind brutality of the natural course of events. This rebellion, lacking any concrete target, fatally degenerated into its opposite colored by these everyday speculations: that nothing is ever lost forever, that the flakes of tobacco and the little match in my pocket will turn back into match and tobacco after accomplishing their cycles of transformation, and that after a time that is neither long nor short, two individuals, confronted by a symbol that is symbolic only to them, endure the breath of an embryonic memory, that of only being momentarily forgotten. Evasions from regret and individual responsibility, gentle slopes down which the human being somnolently slides and forgets that the future alone is not irreparable and that the entire past was once the future...

Nothing responds to despair. Every black or light dream leads back to the sole persistent instinct, to escape from the contours of the self. The thoughtless thought spins around the match, a word, the number 53, the number of our last days.

Earlier, a certain flavor of the “articulation,” a geometrical element in the structure of the dolls, made me aware of a mechanical device called the “Cardan.” Several chance discoveries that occurred during the course of my aimless walks exalted the charm of these three articulated rings and directed my curiosity toward the life of Girolamo Cardano, their inventor. It was only in a work by Lombroso that I eventually found some autobiographical information extracted from his *“de vita propria.”* Anxious over the fate of his son, who had been convicted of fatally poisoning his wife, Cardano spent weeks of indescribable suffering up to the very day of the public execution. He had kept count of the number of days he had spent huddled up as if miserly with his terror: 53.

This note from my diary, blindly jotted down from memory, appears to me to be in need of critical rectification today. In truth, I had not kept count of the days as they were passing; the figure of 53 was not a symbol fixed in my mind at their end. When reading the passage concerning the life of Cardano, I experienced a violent shudder when I saw that his number and my own were identical. In a delirious frenzy I did the math, not thinking that there were several possibilities on which to base

my calculations: from the day we were given the prognosis, or from the day I arrived at the hospital. I don't even remember if I included the days I did not spend at the hospital. But the quick calculation that I made without hesitation was correct.



Faced with an incurable affliction or a forbidden desire, man moves into a particular defensive attitude that is not dictated by reason. He summons a solution feverishly and continues to seek it by blending the impossible and the possible, the virtual and the real, laughter and terror. It could be said that he enters a surrealistic atmosphere, whose basis is provided by elementary instinct: to see the image of the source of the excitation divided in half. The range of this instinctive reflex is already established. It goes from the identification of a number belonging to the fate of Cardano with my own fate, to the equally irrational identification of an ailing tooth with a clenched fist. Both cases of identical identification derive from the same rebellion, to be less miserably subject to suffering and the natural limitations of the individual.

However, it still seems difficult to define just what the effect and the effectiveness of these "identical solutions" boils down to. This effect emerges as surprise, shock, rapture, or a sense of won-

der, or finally as a vertiginous sensation of another more intense and multiplied reality of the “ego.”

The manifest content of these equations was often quite banal, often disproportionately too small to provide any effective satisfaction, and leads one to ask what more serious identification it might actually reflect. There can be no mistake: the two sides of the equation charged with conflicting values—on the one hand the actual excitation to which one is subjected, on the other the intentional, virtual excitation—can be boiled down in the last analysis as the opposition of the individual world to the non-individual world. For it is certain that everything that is hostile to the individual, everything that is deadly to me or simply imposed upon me, will be incorporated into the “universal” principle just as, for example, nature will be held responsible for the water that annoys me, whether it comes from a cloud or the wound on my broken leg.

These proofs of identical identity reach fruition beyond the conscious will of the “self.” The self instead witnesses the solution of its own conflicts as a spectator and perceives two active factors in astonishment: the intervention of an individual “non-self” of “INTUITION,” and that of a messenger coming from the outside world: “CHANCE.”

When the two factors seem to work independently of one another to achieve convergent goals concerning the “self,” the

shock of this double intervention produces a strange multiplication of consciousness. It is without my effort that a reversible function may occur between the unconscious “self” and blind chance, between the INDIVIDUAL and the UNIVERSE.

In the case of the “53 days”—even if this might only be the inconceivably precise resemblance of two mutually independent destinies—the intuitive grasp, if not interpretation, of the subject has a certain role to play. But another case from this same category also needs to be told because of its exceptional nature excluding any intervention by the “ego” or the “other,” which could have encouraged chance. The exactitude and documentation of this story has been scrupulously verified.

After much hesitation I decided to leave the province to move back into Paris under conditions that I anticipated would be difficult and were not of the sort to ease my life’s problems.

A woman from Paris had sometimes come to share my isolation in the province as friend, comrade, collaborator and, it seemed to me, sister of the impossible. Despite sensible forebodings and an honestly admitted “cynicism,” it is certain that the charm, the dangers, and the colorful complicity of this inconsistent and intermittent liaison had totally bewitched me. There was no rea-

son at all for me to derive happiness from it; to the contrary I had the most serious reasons of self-defense for breaking off this connection.

When the night express train departed I was flooded with all these thoughts. I then applied myself to this deadly necessary task of unmaking an image that I had created, so as not to become its victim. Externally everything worked in my favor: a fortuitous encounter in the corridor of the car; even the movement of the train fed the flames of my desire for freedom. Internally I listed in good order the arguments that should depreciate the image in question and force it out of the emotional zone. Finally, toward dawn, a little bit of sleep seemed to have condensed my conclusions because I awoke with the conviction of having freed myself from a nightmare that threatened to paralyze my freedom of movement and resiliency.

Encouraged, I got up to use the bathroom. Next to the bathroom I found the remnants of an illustrated magazine. Before even picking up one of these torn pages I stared disinterestedly at the visible image. It was—I could barely admit to myself—her photograph in *Elle*, the very image I had tried to internally annihilate that very night.

Announced by the voice of chance this signified that my efforts had been in vain. I would rather have been the victim of a hallucination or delirious interpretation caused by fatigue and nervous tension.

The photograph was part of a story about the strike that had just ended in the Paris Metro. It depicted a truck driver holding a young woman in his arms to help her out of the vehicle. When I showed this image to her she was, like me, stupefied. She recognized it down to the smallest details of her clothing and the shoes she was wearing and could remember the time it took place. She was unaware that she had been photographed and had no professional or other reason to be depicted in an illustrated magazine.

Nothing imaginable could have facilitated the path to me which this image took by chance. It arrived like a warning from an unknown sender, of which I had to become aware and whose receipt I could not refuse. I understood that the charm and paralysis persisted. Four or five weeks later, discouraged and bewildered, I returned to the south of France.



When will and reason strive to correct by force or even to strike out a bad channel of personal evolution—bad probably because

it is necessarily so—"truth" then makes its appearance like an ambassador that is as necessary and incontestable as an object, and unsuspected because there is no "egoistic" intention behind it.

Does this mean that nothing devised by the individual has any credibility? His will is suspect, because it is intentional; geometry and algebra are suspect, because they are the grocer's scales; the reasoning instinct, and utility, are objects of scorn on account of their profound uselessness; and even the unconscious is not to be trusted because it serves as a storage cellar for the conscious mind. What is not confirmed by chance has no validity.

One would like to think a projection screen exists that extends between the ego and the outside world, upon which the subconscious projects the image of its predominant excitation, but which is only visible to the conscious mind (and objectively communicable) in the case where "the other side," the outside world, projects the same image on the screen at the same time, and if these two congruent images are superimposed.

It is in varying percentages of efficacy that intuition on the one hand, and chance from the outside world on the other, share in such examples of convergence. There remains a degree of question of varying magnitude, which can become surprisingly large—as in the case above—if, in this particular instance, the individual's contribution—his part of the interpretation—is reduced to zero. This is when a vertiginous interpretation of the

universe seems to be felt as if the universe was a double of the super ego, a superior, thinking entity.

For the duration of a spark, the individual and the non-individual become interchangeable and the terror of the mortal limitation of the ego in time and space appears to be annulled. Nothingness has ceased to exist. It seems only when everything which is not man combines with him, that he can then be himself. He seems to exist, including his most singularly individual elements, independently of himself in the universe. It is at these times of "solution" that a fear shorn of terror can be transformed into a feeling of living at a heightened power; to appear to be one—even beyond birth and death—with the tree, the "other," and fate's necessary strokes of chance, to remain almost "one-self" on the other side.

It is to be hoped that with the preceding remarks, the question of the irrational will be safe from any confusion-inducing, religious, para-religious, and mystical speculations. This unknown is restored at the moment that—for the purpose of an impassioned disoccultation within the exact focal point of human behavior—it becomes experimental.



About the Author

HANS BELLMER (1902–1975) was one of the most uncompromising artists of the twentieth century. An associate of the Dadaists and Surrealists, throughout his work he pursued a profoundly personal, eroticized vision that defies any simplistic categorization.

Bellmer was born in Katowice, Poland, to a middle-class family. As a young man he was arrested in 1922 for exhibiting artwork that “undermined the moral supports of the state.” In 1923 he moved to Berlin where, under the influence of George Grosz and others, he further developed the formidable skills in draftsmanship that underlie all his later graphic work. In 1933 Bellmer abandoned his established career as a publicity artist and cultivated an increasingly obsessive relationship with the remarkable dolls he had begun to fabricate (inspired by the discovery of a box of childhood toys) and photograph. In 1938 Bellmer relocated to Paris. The following year he was arrested—along with Max Ernst—and sent to an internment camp for German nationals, but released after a number of months. In 1941 he threw his passport down a sewer drain. Bellmer spent

the remainder of his life in France, often in difficult circumstances. He died in Paris in 1975, and is buried next to Unica Zürn in the Père Lachaise Cemetery.

Bellmer's friendships with literary figures such as Jöe Bousquet, Paul Eluard, and Georges Bataille resulted in a number of collaborations and illustrated books. His personal relations with women were often fraught with tragedy: his first wife, Margarete, died from tuberculosis; his second marriage ended in divorce; his lover and associate Nora Mitrani died before she could complete a biography of Bellmer entitled *Rose au cœur violet* (Rose with a Violet Heart); and his later collaborator and lover, the poet Unica Zürn, committed suicide by jumping from the window of his apartment after a protracted struggle with schizophrenia.

Bellmer's diverse artistic output ranged from sculpture and *objets provocateur*, to drawings, gouaches, engravings, and photographs. In the decades since they were conceived, these explicit creations have lost none of their power—in fact, they have only become more controversial.

Over the course of his life Hans Bellmer wrote a variety of short texts, along with two small books: *Die Puppe* (The Doll, 1934) and *Petite Anatomie de l'inconscient physique ou l'anatomie de l'image* (Little Anatomy of the Physical Unconscious, or the Anatomy of the Image, 1957).

Bellmer's art has been collected in a number of monographs, most recently and elegantly in Pierre Dourthe's *Bellmer: Le principe de perversion* (Bellmer: The Principal of Perversion, 2000). His career has also been the subject of two recent "psychosexual" critical studies in English: Sue Taylor's *Hans Bellmer: The Anatomy of Anxiety* (2000) and Therese Lichtenstein's *Behind Closed Doors: The Art of Hans Bellmer* (2001).

A most astute assessment was voiced in René Passeron's entry on the artist in the *Phaidon Encyclopedia of Surrealism* (1978): "[Hans Bellmer stands] in the front rank of those who knew how to rescue modern eroticism from Puritan vulgarity and from rejection."

About the Translator

JON GRAHAM (born 1954) is an artist, writer, and editor. His well-received translations from the French include *Arthur Rimbaud: Presence of an Enigma* by Jean-Luc Steinmetz (2001), *Immortality and Reincarnation* by Alexandra David-Neel (1997), *The Immaculate Conception* by André Breton and Paul Eluard (1990), and numerous works by the Celticist Jean Markale. Forthcoming translations include works by Philippe d'Iribarne and Alain de Benoist.